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RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHAH #0529/01 1191135
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 281135Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0686
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3693
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1511
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1378
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1947
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2460

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000529

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, INL/AAE, EEB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [SNAR](#) [IR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: AFTER THREATS TO CANCEL, TURKMENISTAN HOSTS REGIONAL TRADE
CONFERENCE -- BUT DOES NOT PARTICIPATE

REF: ASHGABAT 401

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Turkmenistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) neglected to follow up appropriately during the process of organizing the EU-UNDP Border Management and Drug Actions Programs in Central Asia (BOMCA/CADAP) workshop on Trade Facilitation. The lack of MFA follow-through was so severe that MFA officials attempted on April 19 to cancel the workshop scheduled to take place on April 21-22. In the end, the workshop took place, but without the active participation of Turkmen officials, making the utility of this workshop marginal at best. The problems that beset this workshop highlight the lack of coordination between Turkmenistan's ministries and MFA's serious human resource problem. END SUMMARY.

POOR COORDINATION AND BUREACRACY

[1](#)2. (SBU) The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Czech Republic Technical Cooperation Project and EU-UNDP Border Management and Drug Actions Programs in Central Asia (BOMCA/CADAP) held a trade facilitation workshop in Ashgabat on April 21-22 for officials from customs, border patrol, sanitary epidemiological and veterinary agencies throughout Central Asia, and representatives from diplomatic missions and international organizations in Ashgabat. The official opening of the conference was delayed because no Government of Turkmenistan officials showed up for the ceremony, and the Government of Turkmenistan neither participated nor made any presentations. BOMCA Country Manager Batyr Kurbanov (please strictly protect throughout) said that representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) called him on Saturday, April 19, to say that they would have to cancel the conference because they were not ready, but Kurbanov was able to talk them out of taking this drastic step.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY AT MFA

[1](#)3. (SBU) Kurbanov said that MFA did not provide for adequate participation of Turkmen officials and that international participants noticed the lack of government presentations at the

workshop. Kurbanov said that MFA is overwhelmed with the high volume of tasks its small staff is asked to handle and cannot keep up with all requests effectively and in a timely manner. In addition, MFA is not effectively coordinating activities on an interagency level. For example, Kurbanov and his staff were under the impression that the State Counternarcotics Commission -- with which BOMCA implements all its projects -- would ensure Turkmenistan's participation. However, it did not do so because the subject of the workshop fell under the responsibilities of the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations. Neither the State Counternarcotics Commission nor the Ministry of Trade took any action, and therefore no representative from either organization attended or prepared a presentation. In an attempt to save face, the MFA attempted to delay or cancel the event -- a difficult situation for BOMCA as all other delegations had already arrived in Turkmenistan.

USEFUL TOPICS...BUT NO RESULTS

¶4. (SBU) The workshop covered topics which Turkmenistan needs to be aware of as it increases openness to the outside world, including integrated approaches to trade facilitation, experiences of other countries in trade facilitation, trade and transit corridor approaches in Central Asia, and international standards for trade information exchange. However, the overall workshop was unproductive due to Turkmenistan's lack of participation. While regional representatives were eager to learn more about Turkmenistan's experience, Turkmen attendees did not participate in any discussions and did not make presentations on issues related to Turkmenistan's procedures and experience in trade and transport facilitation. Turkmen officials also refrained from engaging in discussions related to the adoption of recommendations on countries' needs and priorities in trade facilitation. International

ASHGABAT 00000529 002 OF 002

participants appeared uncomfortable because of the unwillingness of Turkmen participants to engage.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Post is not the only foreign mission that has noticed that the MFA lacks the proper resources (human and otherwise) needed to complete their tasks in an effective manner. While it is positive that Turkmenistan wants to host high-profile regional and international meetings, the lack of active participation from Turkmenistan and poor government coordination in hosting the event brings little utility in the end. END COMMENT.

CURRAN